

Russia: A Brief Political History

AP World History
West Hills High School

Overall Characteristics/Themes Visible Throughout Russia History

1. Invasions and fear of invasion
2. Openness to West – or not
3. Alternating periods of repression and reform
4. Little or no history of democracy

Invasion

- Russian political history began with an invasion
- 1237-1240 Mongol Invasion: forces of Gengis Khan move from North China across the continent to take Moscow
 - Tatars: a Turkish people who were also invading Russia – became agents/administrators for Mongols

1240-1480 Mongol/Tatar Rule

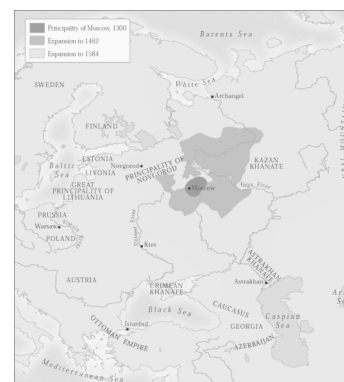
- Brutal invasion
- Russia “hibernated” and missed the high middle ages of Europe
- 1480 Ivan III (Ivan the Great) formally renounces Mongol rule over Russia



Early Empire



- Ivan III - “gathering of Russian land”
- Moscow becomes powerful state
- Cossacks (Turkish word = “free men”) - peasants help expand borders
- Adopted Byzantine traditions - Third Rome



Ivan the Terrible

- Ivan III's son
- Began "assemblies of the land" - groups that informed him of local situations
- Military elite (*boyars*) threatened power
- Granted new powers, sought and killed "traitors" and innocents

Ivan the Terrible

- Died with no heir, Russia in disarray
- Civil War, Polish invasion ensue



Openness to the West – or not

- Romanov Dynasty begins in 1613, when Russian independence is restored
- First three Romanovs work to help Russia "catch up" with Europe:
 - Organized/modernized trade and commerce
 - Efforts toward education and chronicling histories
 - Bringing in European artists

Openness to the West

- 1689-1725 Tsar Peter the Great
 - Traveled widely; preference for things Western; contempt for Russian backwardness
 - "Westernizing"
 - Modernized army, continued expansion
 - *Table of Ranks* - allowed movement in government based upon merit
 - Built Saint Petersburg



Reform, then Repression

- 1762-1796 Catherine the Great (tsarina, czarina)
- Initially "open" with reforms . . .
- French Revolution, rebellion at home led her to become more oppressive



Russian Expansion

- Russian empire would stand until 1991
- Orthodox/Catholic rivalry w/ Poland brings acquisition of Ukraine, partition of Poland
- In South, take land from Ottomans in Crimean War
- In East, Russians displace natives, take Manchuria
- Claimed Alaska, visited California, Hawaii



Russian Life

- Orthodox Christianity eventually controlled by Tsar.
- Mostly agrarian
- Most peasants tied to land, Tsars created laws that backed land owners